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Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Letter dated 25 May 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I should like to express appreciation for your interest in and concern about the events in Andijan.

In order to provide you with further information and for the information of the States Members of the United Nations, I have the honour to transmit attached hereto a note from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the United Nations concerning the events in the Andijan region (see annex).

I should like to request that this letter and its annex be circulated among the States Members of the United Nations.

(*Signed*) Alisher **Vohidov**
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 25 May 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General and, on instructions from its Government, has the honour to inform him that the Republic appreciates His Excellency's concern about the events in Andijan, which was expressed in his statement of 16 May 2005 and in a telephone conversation between His Excellency and the President of Uzbekistan, Mr. Islam Karimov, on 19 May 2005.

As is well known, on the night of 12/13 May tragic events occurred in that city that were connected with an attempt by extremist forces to destabilize the situation in Uzbekistan and throughout Central Asia.

Approximately 30 armed criminals, who had planned in advance assaults on Government facilities, attacked the patrol and sentry service and a military unit. Having seized a large number of firearms and grenades, the fighters invaded the grounds of a correctional labour colony, where they committed acts of violence against the soldiers on duty and freed approximately 600 prisoners, including persons convicted of terrorist activities as well as ordinary criminals.

The attackers then attempted to take over buildings housing the regional internal affairs offices and the national security service. These efforts, however, were suppressed by the law-enforcement forces. Nevertheless, armed bandits succeeded in seizing the regional administration building.

Along their path the criminals took no fewer than 20 prisoners hostage. In the regional administration building, the terrorists set up firing points and sniper positions on the roof. At the same time, many of them contacted relatives by mobile telephone and demanded that they come with their families to the administration building. In this manner, the criminals were able to assemble approximately 300 persons at the building that they had seized, including women, elderly persons and children and thus created a "living shield" around themselves.

This special services also recorded international telephone calls from the terrorists to subscribers in the territory of other States, particularly Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan.

Upon his arrival in Andijan, Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov set up a headquarters for freeing the hostages and neutralizing the terrorists. The mission was undertaken to do everything possible to minimize the danger to life and free the hostages who had been seized.

Negotiations were conducted for almost 11 hours. The authorities of Uzbekistan accepted serious compromises: they agreed to free six arrested extremists, offered to provide the terrorists with buses and take them, together with their weapons, to an area indicated by them, The terrorists, however, kept putting forward further conditions, aware that they could not be met, for example, freeing a number of imprisoned leaders of religious extremist organizations and bringing them by aeroplane to Andijan. Thus, by politicizing their demands, they deadlocked the negotiations.

At approximately 2000 hours on 13 May 2005, the criminals, having understood that the Government forces were preparing to storm their positions, and attempting to forestall that attack, moved in several columns taking cover behind the hostages and left the regional administration building. The pursuit and destruction of the fighters continued outside Andijan on the evening of that day and on the morning of 14 May 2005. Units of the fighters were able to disperse within the region, and other units succeeded in filtering across the border with Kyrgyzstan.

Totally innocent persons died as a result of this incident. Many also died among those who had been deceived by their own fanatical leaders and those who were carrying out the orders of their foreign patrons and sponsors.

At the present time, the situation in Andijan and its surrounding areas is fully under the control of the agencies of the authorities, and the normal activities of the entire local infrastructure have been restored. Representatives of the international mass media and the diplomatic corps accredited to Uzbekistan, who visited Andijan on 18 May 2005, were able to see this for themselves.

The General Prosecutor's Office of Uzbekistan has instituted criminal proceedings for the armed attacks on the police station, the military unit, and the corrective labour colony and the seizure of the administrative building with the hostages.

I should like to draw your attention to the following in connection with the events in Andijan.

Firstly, all available facts and preliminary materials indicate that those who organized and carried out the armed attack in Andijan are members of the Islamic group Akromiya, which is directly linked to the religious extremist organization Hizb ut-Tahrir, whose activities are prohibited in many countries. Having concealed themselves in the Fergana Valley, fighters from this extremist group attempted to carry out their long-standing plans to overthrow the constitutional authorities elected by the people and establish a so-called "caliphate". On 17 May 2005, a group of extremists drew the emblem of the "caliphate" on the building of Uzbekistan's embassy in London, where the headquarters of Hizb ut-Tahrir is located.

Secondly, although the investigation into the events in question has only begun, it is already possible to establish with definite certainty a link between the fighters and extremists organizations that are active in certain countries of the region, and also terrorist groups that are hiding in the territory of Afghanistan.

Thirdly, armed attacks, premeditated murder and the seizure of hostages are the most brutal criminal offences in all States in the world and are punished severely under the law. The investigation into these crimes is being conducted within the framework of criminal legislation by the agencies of the General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic. In this connection, we consider the calls for dialogue with the bandits absolutely unfounded and the proposals for mediation set forth in them inadmissible.

Fourthly, the incorrect and arbitrary interpretation of the tragic events in Andijan by the official representatives of the Governments of certain countries is perplexing. The attempts to depict the armed criminals as "fighters for democracy" once again demonstrate the proclivity of certain individual States to employ "double standards" in interpreting anti-terrorist efforts by States.

The nature and the development of the events in Andijan have confirmed that they are the result of subversive activities by extremists groups and their foreign sponsors:

- The use of weapons in the attack,
- The release of prisoners from prison,
- The seizure of the hostages and the local administration building,
- The nature of the attackers' demands (to release prisoners convicted of terrorist activities),
- The use of civilians as a "living shield" consisting of elderly people, women and children. Taking cover behind this human shield, the attackers opened fire first, using more than 300 firearms and killing 37 members of the law enforcement agencies.

In this connection, the Uzbek side calls upon the States Members of the United Nations and the Organization's governing bodies to be restrained and responsible in evaluating the events in Andijan. We also urge them to wait for the results of the official investigation, which will be open. The press conference organized by the General Prosecutor's Office on 17 May 2005 for local and international journalists as well as representatives of the diplomatic corps is an example of this. Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov participated in the press conference. Journalists and diplomats were informed about the progress of the investigation and the initial proof of the brutal plans of the terrorists and were also given objective information about the current situation in Andijan.

On 23 May 2005, the Parliament of Uzbekistan set up an independent parliamentary commission for a comprehensive investigation of the circumstances connected with the events in Andijan and an in-depth analysis and determination of the reasons and conditions which led to the tragic events. The commission will conduct a comprehensive analysis of the actions by the Government of Uzbekistan and the security structures and make a legal assessment of them and will also systematically inform the Parliament and the public, inter alia, through the mass media, about the course of the investigation.

Uzbekistan supports your view set forth in the report "In larger freedom" to the effect that, under current circumstances, terrorism and organized crime, together with other threats, are becoming deeply interrelated. An overall campaign against these threats and challenges must undoubtedly be one of the basic elements of the collective security strategy in the twenty-first century.

In this connection, it should be noted that all measures by Uzbekistan to counteract the threats of extremism and terrorism are being carried out within the framework of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Uzbekistan takes this opportunity to convey to the Secretary-General the renewed assurances of its highest consideration.

New York, 25 May 2005